
From: cityclerk
Subject: FW: Letter for inclusion in Agenda

From: Emma vanDinter [Redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, April 11, 2023 10:09 AM
To: cityclerk <cityclerk@princegeorge.ca>
Subject: Letter for inclusion in Agenda

For inclusion in the Council Meeting Agenda

From: Emma vanDinter [Redacted]

Dear Mayor and Council,

My name is Emma vanDinter. I am graduating this year from the University of Northern British Columbia with a Bachelor of Art degree in anthropology and archaeology. I am 23 years old and have lived in Prince George my entire life and have recognized the growing crisis seen in the downtown core of the city. I am writing in regards to Parks and Open Space Bylaw No.7370, 2002, Amendment Bylaw No. 9389, 2023.

I am writing to express concerns about the city's negligence towards helping our local unhoused community, particularly that of the centralized encampment strategy proposed last month. This strategy continues a historical tradition in Prince George of displacing, forcibly relocating, dispossessing, and committing domicile to a population of people that is majority Indigenous. This is not a new strategy, but something the city has been persisting for well over a century. At its roots, it is a racist endeavour and aims to help nobody in the city yet harm a significant many.

The city's proposal calls for the money that has been put aside to help this vulnerable community as well as our tax dollars being put towards fencing and police presence at Moccasin Flats. It would be more beneficial to forgo these expenses and to apply the money to actually help the community. Clean water accessible in the flats, heating in the winter months, sanitary washrooms and showers, garbage removal, and electricity. These are the things that people need help with, yet the city encourages that they be contained in a closed space with none of these amenities. It can be compared to an open-aired prison, animal cage, or even worse, a ghetto in 2023 Prince George. Is it correct to treat vulnerable unhoused citizens worse than our murderers and pedophiles locked up in the correctional facility, who live in much better conditions than what is proposed in the city's strategy?

Criminalization of the unhoused is a disgusting rhetoric that has been repeated throughout the city's history. There needs to be deeper investigation as to who are the criminals that are selling illegal and harmful drugs, stealing, bullying, and assaulting unhoused people. This needs to be done so that every unhoused person is not labeled and treated as a criminal when they are the victims of those that are. There needs to be a deeper investigation into what is happening at the shelters. At our protest nearly every unhoused person who spoke to us mentioned abuse, crime, and unsafety happening within the shelters. How can we expect people to use these facilities if this is what is being portrayed? Above all else, there needs to be a deeper investigation into the lives of those living on Prince George's streets. Without proper consultation process and perspectives taken into account before passing harsh policies against this community, the city is persisting with colonialism and racism.

Unhoused people are people too, and they need safe streets just as much as the rest of the city. As I have grown up to feel protected and guarded by the police, these people learn to fear, hide, and run from those that are supposed to be protecting them. It is twisted how the police only protect those with property, the rest, according to this strategy, are criminals.

The city of Prince George advocates for safe streets, but only to those that own property? It is time to accept that there will be people living on our streets (especially with these housing prices), and displacement will not help them and will not help the city. Please stop with these outrageous policies and start helping.

Sincerely,
Emma vanDinter